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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Wednesday, October 26, 1938

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "FOOD SHOPPING TIPS." Information from the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, United States Department of Agriculture, and the Consumers' Counsel, Agricultural Adjustment Administration.

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Cheering news today for the listener who goes food-shopping on a careful budget or a slim pocketbook. For the market news just in today says: "Price trend in meats, poultry, and citrus fruits generally is downward during the last months of the year."

So you can expect more meats, poultry and citrus fruit for your money, at least until the first of January.

Some other foods may go up in price. Usually butter prices go up through December. And the upswing in egg prices lasts through November. Apple and grape prices ordinarily move up after hitting their seasonal low point in October. Cabbage, celery, onions and potatoes also go up in price after October and November.

Do you buy your bread, or do you make it yourself? Here's some news about bread prices. The average retail price of white bread in the United States has dropped to its lowest level since early 1937 as the result of reductions in 20 of the 51 cities that report food costs to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The big changes in the price of bread are in eastern cities. But the indications are that the price of bread may soon go down in other cities.

You can begin planning now to eat all the grapefruit you want this winter. For record grapefruit supplies are in the offing for 1938 and 1939. A crop that will pack into over 40 million boxes--more than one box for each family in the country--is about a third larger than the bumper crop of the season just ended. Grapefruit season opens in September and shipments are heavy from October through May. About a third of the grapefruit crop comes from Florida and most of the rest from Texas.

You can buy grapefruit either with or without seeds. And you can buy it with the usual pale yellow flesh or with delicate pink flesh. Pink grapefruit comes mostly from Texas but they are also growing it in Florida. It differs mostly in color, very little in flavor. By the way, if you buy grapefruit by the box, you can tell how many you are buying from the number marked on the side of the box.

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Here are a couple more grapefruit-buying tips. Choose grapefruit that is heavy, feels firm yet springy, and has thin skin. You don't need to worry much about blemishes on the skin. They are mostly only skin-deep and don't affect its eating quality. Keep grapefruit in a cool dry place. This year you should find excellent grapefruit on the market. Texas producers are shipping only grapefruit grading U. S. No. 2 or better this year. And Florida has raised its standard for mature grapefruit again this year. Its standard depends on how much sugar and juice the fruit contains.

Beside grapefruit, the markets will have a lot of oranges to sell this winter. From October through spring the country will have a tenth more oranges than its record-size crop of last year. During this period about a third of the oranges on the market are California Navels while over half the total supply are all varieties of Florida oranges. Oranges usually reach their top price in October and then become cheaper until February. Current prices have been relatively low largely because of the big crop last year.

Tangerines are coming on the market this month, too. Tangerines--those small oranges with puffy skins that shed easily and some people call "kid-glove" oranges--have a season running from October through March but their heaviest shipments come along at holiday time--late November and December. Practically all domestic supplies come from Florida where a crop about a fourth larger than last year's and almost up to the 1936 record crop is expected.

Not so many cranberries coming in this season, though. Unfavorable weather in September is the main cause. We'll have only half as many cranberries as we had last year--the smallest crop since 1918, except for the drought year of 1934.

So much for fruits. Now about vegetables. Lots and lots of cabbage. Much more cabbage than last year--much more late cabbage, that is, so you can count on having all the cole slaw and sauerkraut you want in this winter's menus.

As for canned vegetables, just about as many were put up this year as last. Not so many tomatoes and tomato products put up this summer. And not so much asparagus and spinach. But the canners have made up for that by putting up more of almost all other canned vegetables. They've canned a tremendous number of peas and they've now formed a Canned Pea Marketing Cooperative to stabilize marketings and encourage people to eat more canned peas.

Here's egg news. Fresh egg production has bounced back up to its 1937 level, but stocks of storage eggs still are much smaller than last year. And because storage eggs are an important source of supply during the latter part of the year, eggs probably won't be as plentiful as in 1937. But the egg outlook for 1939 is favorable from the supply standpoint.

There's still lots of milk, too--so much, in fact, that manufactured dairy products are low in price this year. On October first of this year, more milk was available to every person in this country than in any other October. And from the looks of things now, you milk-drinkers can go on having your fill every day.

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